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ABSTRACT

The plight of Latin studies in American schools is exposed in the introductory remarks in this paper. Personalized approaches to instruction are discussed, and the author enumerates ways in which the classics may be used to arouse the aesthetic sensitivities of children. Teachers are urged to try to make Latin relevant to the needs and interests of the modern student. (RL)

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"Lions in the Classroom"

by

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LIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

The legacy of the sixties was relevance. America is struggling in the Phoenix nest, shedding her infant skin of technology, and reaching out among the stars. Yet humanity is still tangled in all the ills of Pandora's box: starvation, disease, poverty, pain, tortures and misfortunes of all unnumbered kinds. There is much in our political sphere to remind us of the instability in the last days of the Republic, and we are likewise economically plagued as were the Romans in the last days of the Empire. Our religious temper vacillates from agnosticism and atheism to the blind faith of Utopian communities and the growing number of Jesus freaks. Our "new morality" is our old "immorality." The American flag, motherhood, and apple pie are lost in desecration, abortion, and pot. Men are at the zenith of evil-doing, and we have enough Juvenals to realize that our circumstances are grim.

The Classical Outlook recently published a short poetical statement by Herbert Carson (Classical Outlook, Nov., 1970, p. 30). It begins with a familiar attack:

> "Why write of Greek pillars
> When a world of turmoil surrounds you?
> Become involved!"

Carson admits there are "bombs bursting in air," "the false promise of peace," "riots everywhere," but he concludes that

> "The turmoil never seems to cease
> except in my illusion of peace."

Perhaps as classicists we too easily drift into the "mute solitude" where pillars are "worn bare by wind, sand, and rain." These are gentle destroyers compared to the inventions of the sophistication of this era. Marathon is a minefield, and Leander would quickly be detected by an atomic submarine long before reaching Lesbos. The Rubicon, like all great rivers, is polluted. We have shot the albatross like the ancient mariner, and find ourselves on a painted ocean, gasping for a cool clear drink of pure water.

Our age cries for relevance, and we daily decline and conjugate and read how Caesar moved by as rapid marches as possible. Surely the classics have more to offer. Our classical publications in the last year have offered us many ideas on bridging this gap to understanding: "The Humanities as Human Studies" (Samuel Lieberman, Classical World, April, 1971, pp. 262-263), a "Conference on the Teaching of Latin in Inner-City Schools" (Harry C. Avery, Classical Journal, Oct.-Nov., 1970, pp. 48-50), "The Classics and the Inner-City Child" (Reed Carter, Classical Outlook, March, 1971, pp. 73-74), "The 'Knowledge Explosion' and the Classics" (Gerald M. Erickson, Classical Journal, Feb.-Mar., 1971, pp. 214-217), "A Contemporary Role" (Ronald E. Pepin, Classical Outlook, Dec., 1970, p. 37), "A Future for Classics," (Sarah Gottsman, Classical Outlook, June, 1971, pp. 109-110), "Latin: Signs of a Comeback" (Encyclopedia Britannica Education Corporation, Classical Journal, Apr.-May, 1971, pp. 346-347), and the recent challenge to secondary schools: "If Small Latin, Why Less Greek?" (Lee T. Pearcy, Jr., Classical Outlook, May. 1971, pp. 99-101).

We seem to be suffering from what Junius Eddy calls the "Upsidedown Curriculum" Cultural Affairs, summer, 1970, pp. 19-23, reprint pamphlet by Ford Foundation). The National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages, in a statement on "The Role of Latin in American Education," in February, 1969, endored and encouraged the teaching of Latin. The last sentence of a summary of that report contains the kernel of this session on increasing Latin enrollment.

> "Latin teachers and their modern foreign language colleagues realize that the value of any foreign language study is, in the final analysis, directly dependent upon the effectiveness of their teaching."

A Conference entitled: "Youth, Education, and the Arts," held in St. Louis, in May, 1970, prefaced its report with this statement by Abraham Maslow:

> "Education is learning to grow, learning what to grow toward, learning what is good and bad, learning what to choose and what not to choose." (p.1)

As classicists, we have lost our leadership roles in education, and have been relegated to quiet corners in misguided foreign language departments. In an article in the American Foreign Language Teacher, "Bridges to Understanding Program," (Dec., 1970, pp. 47-48), Daniel Behmer states that Latin is misplaced in the foreign language department, and that it should be the source of western heritage for the total curriculum. In the same issue, John Lazatti calls for the introduction of more courses in English translation, development in cultural as well as language areas, the inclusion in Latin teachers' training of such courses as classical Greek literature, a survey course in Western Arts and Ideas, Classical Greek, Mythology, Greek and Roman Life, ancient philosophy, art, archaeology, and ancient history; a restructuring of the M.A. program to improve the B.A. knowledge areas; more summer work shops for English translation courses; and, lastly, that the American Classical League communicate to the Office of Education new ideas on a classically-oriented curriculum (pp. 37-39).

Some of these suggestions are good; one other, I feel, weakens the preparation of a good teacher. Lazatti urges that language area requirements for Latin teachers be reduced. This might make the field more appealing to those who cannot read Latin, but the long-range effect would create a state wherein no one could comment intelligently on what Cicero really said, but would have to rely on translations.

With all this swimming in our heads, we still must settle on some feasible application within the context of our circumstances. I was fortunate enough to have thirty-five job interviews, which dispelled the idea that schools have no interest at all in keeping Latin in the curriculum. I chose Haworth High School in Kokomo, Indiana, because it opened in 1968 for the first time, when I was beginning to teach, and I was promised the opportunity of building a Latin program. The system uses Henry and Ullman's Latin for Americans, a text published by Macmillan. The first year I had one first-year class of

thirty-one students. This class size is too large, and there are many difficulties inherent in instructing so many students, namely making an effort to see that each student understands what is happening. Nevertheless, fifteen survived into my second-year class, and first-year enrollment increased to forty-one. In that second year I introduced one section of Latin and Greek Derivatives, using Ansel Greene's Word Clues, published by Harcourt, Brace and World. Enrollment in that first semester class was twenty-five. The second semester Derivative enrollment was forty-seven. Total Latin enrollment had increased from thirty-one to one hundred and three.

For the year just completed, Latin I mysteriously dropped to twenty-seven, but Latin II had seventeen, and I had eight in Latin III. Derivative enrollment for the first semester was ninety, and ninety-four for the second semester, giving a yearly total of one hundred and forty-six, which was 8.7% of our 9-12 school enrollment of 1740 students. For this coming fall, enrollment figures as of May 1 show thirty-three in Latin I, twenty in Latin II (I lost only seven of this year's twenty-seven), nine in Latin III, and two in Latin IV. The Derivatives enrollment for the first semester will be about 75-77, hopefully finding a levelling point.

Of course I am very proud of an increase from 1968 to 1971 of thirty-one to one hundred and forty-six. But more important is the chance to impart something of what I know and appreciate of our classical heritage. Our creative energies are the fountains of perception and imagination. "Education should therefore be conceived as primarily a cultivation of these activities, as aesthetic education" (Herbert Reed, report of "Youth, Education, and the Arts," p. 1).

Allen Sap, Executive Director of ARTS-WORTH, a project of the National Council on Arts in Education, at a conference in Indianapolis, Indiana in May, 1971, said that we must arouse the aesthetic sensitivities of our children for many reasons: (1) as a requirement for critical examination of this world and our

intellectual environment: (2) for an appreciation of the true and the false: (3) for gradations of judgment, since the complexities of our civilization sometimes defy a right and wrong: (4) for a tolerance of the plural cultures of American life: for with our rapid means of communication and travel, there is a loss of regionality, and a forced homogenization of many cultural backgrounds: (5) as a means of communication with the physical world, for how little we sometimes understand the equation of reality: (6) for the bridging of tradition in the future, since in this present age we are caught in the paradox of a collision of the past and the future: (7) and lastly, we are responsible for arousing a sensitivity in our students to the identify of time, and a clear perception of the fact that artists and scientists are really seeking similar goals. The triumph of human intelligence is our ability to communicate ideas through the use of vocabulary. However, because of the extreme technological expression of language, we can easily become prisoners of words.

In all this the classicist should be a central figure. In many ways the continuation of classical studies is more the responsibility of high school teachers than college instructors. This is true because on a secondary level we have a greater opportunity to contact students and influence their educational direction. We often fail in this challenge because of our lack of enthusiasm. It is imperative that we be enthusiastic about Latin and Greek, not only as languages, but also for what they can communicate to an age of redefinition. We are being forced to redefine many of our essential ideas: When does life begin? When is someone legally dead? What is peace? Is it ever possible? What is man? How does he think? What is right and wrong? What are the limits of freedom? It is interesting to note that these are the same questions the Greeks were asking.

We can direct students into so many fields of knowledge starting from our Latin textbooks. In first-year Latin the text is central to instruction, but there are so many supplementary materials available to catch the interest of students. Each Monday is Culture Day in Latin classes at Haworth. First-year emphases are on deriva-

tives and mythology. I use Edith Hamilton's Mythology. I teach the first chapter on the gods to give the students an idea of the family structure--a who's who on Olympus. Then each culture day two or three students are each assign a chapter to discuss orally before the class. They lecture, use charts they have made, and whatever tapes or filmstrips they wish to enhance their presentations. Our Audio-Visual library contains about sixty-five filmstrips which we can use. There are always question periods, and mention is made of the heritage we have from mythology, such as the FTD florists' symbol, Ajax Cleanser, Jupiter stores, Mercury cars, and hundreds of other examples. Literary allusions also aid the students in making sense of English Romantic poetry, or even a reference to Rod McKuen or Elton John.

Classically-oriented film rentals are also a means of increasing enthusiasm and appreciation of classical heritage. In the last two years we have seen feature length versions of "Jason and the Argonauts," "Ulysses," "Hannibal," and "Barabbas," as well as a regular yearly rental of twenty-three 15-30 minute films dealing with classical culture.

We also sing Latin songs and carols. I begin songs like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" and "Brother John," at the beginning of the first-year to give my students confidence in speaking Latin, for we often sight-read lessons in our text. I have made a game out of seeing who can read the longest in Latin without making a mistake in pronunciation or accentuation. Students nearly fight to get their hands in the air first when a mistake is made. It is then their turn to read, after they correct the error.

The Saturnalia celebration, complete with Roman costume, food, and ceremony, is an annual event in December, with much preparation and excitement. The students are really proud of their togas and tunics, and some go to great lengths to dress authentically. A special attraction this year was a series of gladiatorial combats in full dress of short red tunics and leather breastplates, but with foil-covered cardboard swords!

Special events last spring were the Olympic Games. We challenged the modern languages in as many categories as the Indiana High School Athletic Association would allow, excluding only the discus and javelin throws. We had hoped to have chariot races with teams of girls pulling the chariots, but could only find one pony cart. The track schedule this year did not allow any such events.

Of course second-year students participate in all our events, too. We have formed a Latin Club of about sixty-five members, organizing ourselves on the Roman government, with consuls, praetors, senators, and all the other forms. Hopefully, we will affiliate with J.C.L. this fall. The emphases in second-year are on Roman history, biographies of statesmen and authors, and an introduction to classical drama in translation, such as Euripides' "Medea", and "Alcestis." We also do extra sight-reading in Latin Readings, published by Scott Foresman.

I have only taught third-year once. The emphasis of the first semester was Cicero's Orations, which I expanded into a detailed study of that final thirty or forty years of the Republic, when so many events were happening which students could parallel to current events in America. We held a two-day seminar before the second-year class, in which students of the third-year presented papers comparing and distinguishing Zeus, Jupiter, Odin, and a panorama of Mexican deities who held similar positions. The most lasting effect of the presentation was the death of the gods, an area to which the students had not previously given much thought. They used my own library of about fifty books on all aspects of the supreme gods, and did a remarkable job of research. I taped the whole presentation and the following discussion, which made them feel even more important, and to do their best in front of the second-year class.

The second semester included generous amounts of More Latin Readings, a second workbook in the Scott Foresman series. In all, students were confronted with Latinized Aesopic fables, and several Latin authors: Martial, Catullus, Horace,

Phaedrus, Apuleius, and a smattering of Qunitillian and St. Jerome. In addition, we spent several days tracing the development of comedy from Aristophanes through Terence, and compiled a list of stock characters in Roman comedy which are still evident in comedians like Red Skelton, Gomer Pyle, Sid Caesar, Lucille Ball, and others. This gave Roman comedy a new vitality, and the students eagerly took reading parts in the "Menaechmi." We also reviewed Euripides' "Medea," then read Seneca's version of the same play in English, for comparisons in dramatic presentation, character development, writing styles, etc. The students preferred Euripides' play over the compact and psychological drama of Seneca.

At this point we abandoned our text, and read most of Luigi Barzini's The Italians, a most engrossing book, which takes up the thread of Roman heritage where Edith Hamilton's The Roman Way leaves off. We had read The Roman Way in connection with each author we had covered throughout the year.

To end the semester, we spent two weeks listening to, digesting, and commenting on the rock album, "Jesus Christ Superstar." We were interested not only in the religious aspects, but in the attitudes of Jews and Christians towards the Roman government and what parallels we could draw between this present generation's revolt against authority and society, and that of two thousand years ago. Things have not changed much!

All this may seem a far cry from the hours of Cicero or Vergil ordinarilly familiar to third-year Latin, but I do not think I was a complete traitor to the classical spirit by giving in to a little relevancy.

It is the enthusiastic Latin teacher, who is convinced Latin has something to say to a "right on" generation, who must keep Latin alive. There is no greater pride a teacher can gain than to realize that his students have broader minds than when they entered his class; are more tolerant in their reactions to different

ways of living, and more perceptive and appreciative of the balancing effect a classical background can have in helping them confront the challenges of life in the closing decades of the twentieth century. To them Latin is not a dead language; it has become a common denominator in approaching art, literature, education, philosophy, and language; it has made them acquainted with the mainstream of western civilization, and given scope and reference to the shape and direction of our society. In fact, they have seen the continuity of man's struggles against his environment, the intricacies of his mind working out morality, the seriousness of his determination for juris prudence and economic stability, of his moments of piety and awe, of his hands accomplished in marble and painting and music. And equally important, they have seen his lighter moments of farce and comedy, of Sabine simplicity and Renaissance elegance and form.

This is a heritage we cannot allow students to miss. When we disentangle our feet from the crush of Juvenal's crowded streets, we find a pathway to the Sabine hills, or to "half islet Sirmio, the gem of all the isles." (Catullus, XXXI, in The Golden Age, J.W. Duff, p. 232). Increasing Latin enrollment depends on the will of Latin teachers to instil in their students a love of the classics, not a contempt or dread. Apathetic patrons and money-minded school boards are former high school students. If Latin was a "bad trip" for them, make it an exciting and stimulating adventure for their children. They are the ones who can influence their parents better than anyone else. They are our classical ambassadors. The story is told about a small child who watched a sculptor working on a slab of marble. Day after day the child watched as the sculptor worked. At last there came a day when the child drew in his breath and looked at the sculptor in amazement and said, "But how did you know there was a lion in there?"

There are lions in our young people, and we have the tools to shape them. It has been said that man is good for something only when he dreams. Let us give our students the stuff of dreams, and be proud of the lions that leave our classroom doors.